

LONELINESS IN THE POEMS OF KAMALA DAS

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ABSTRACT

Kamala Das is one of the most prolific and controversial poets and writers of the post-colonial era in Indian English Literature. Her writings have been viewed more in terms of sexual connotations than for their literary merits. Most of the studies on Kamala Das have been centered round on her love poems and man-woman relationships as love has been considered as the most dominant theme of her poetry. Since she writes with the feelings, emotions and sensitivity of a woman and her world and voices her anger against the patriarchal design of the subjugation of women, she has been branded as a Feminist Poet. No woman poet ever before penned her feelings so candidly, intensely and intimately of her subjective experiences as she did in the creative genres. It led her to stand in the category of Confessional poets. However, these are merely the tips of the iceberg. Very few attempts have been made to understand the 'loneliness' of the woman in her writings which unfortunately form the big mass of the iceberg that has remained unexplored. Loneliness is a pre-dominant theme in the poetry of Kamala Das. The present paper explores it alongside her own explorative female consciousness. She raises her consciousness and seeks to live intensely and honestly on her own terms.

KEYWORDS: Loneliness, Search for Love, Man-Woman Relationship

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INTRODUCTION

Loneliness has been traced right from the ancient literature to the modern times. Loneliness is considered as a negative emotional reaction to a sense of solitude. Loneliness is also known as social pain, which is a psychological mechanism that drives people to seek out social interactions. It's frequently linked to an unwelcome lack of closeness and connection. Kamala Das' poetry depicts the challenges and emotional situations she faces as a result of her need for love, sex, and the loneliness that comes with it. Love and sex are two of her greatest passions. She longs for something that isn't there.

Even as a child, she has experienced loneliness and isolation. Neither her parents nor the society in which she grew up were able to assist her in overcoming her feelings of isolation. As she bemoans her parents, she says:

“They take us for decided as well as well thought-out us measly puppets, touching our hobble according to the tugs they provide us; I experience myself to be an interloper in any opening rather than quarry; every daybreak I let know myself that I have to lift up my-self from the unhappiness of my existence and run away, get away into another existence and into one more country”. [1]

Kamala Das felt lonely in her world since she was alone. Except for her grandmother, Kamala was almost completely neglected during her youth, as were the other children in the Nair household. She tells it in her autobiography:

“He (Das’ father) was not of an affectionate nature. So we grew up more or less neglected, and because we were aware of ourselves as neglected children in a Social circle that pampered the young, there Developed between us a strong relationship of Love, the kind a leper may feel for his mate who pushed him on a hand-cart when they went on their begging rounds”. [2]

The story of Kamala Das as portrayed in the autobiography connects her color- conscious patriarchal father and grandmother in her poetry of loneliness. The domineering father of the autobiography who never gives her the freedom of choice and space to live and grow has been projected again in the poem ‘*Only the Soul Knows How to sing*’ as imposing marriage upon her at the age of fifteen. The wedding ceremony offers her no relief or comfort in her loneliness. In her married life, she just has to deal with lust and sex. She has no say in who she chooses as her ideal partner.

The poet uses confessional method to talk about her feelings, reactions, and powerlessness in the face of many forms of tyranny. The father has a dual personality in that he is both a colonizer and a Gandhian. The obedience of his timid wife contributes to the creation of a harmonious environment, which develops the split-character in the poet and becomes the predicament of all Indian women who claim to be happy and satisfied, as presented in the poem ‘The Suicide’.

I must pose.

I must pretend,

I must act the role

Of happy woman,

Happy wife. [3]

When the grandmother forces gender awareness on a child who is still living in her world of innocence, she responds by wearing her brother's shirt and trousers, cutting her hair short, and ignoring her womanliness. Her estrangement has manifested itself in her inability to fit in, to confirm the ‘slave-morality’ in a pre-determined mould.

Not only is her psychology conditioned, but so is her feeling. Even when she is betrayed in love, the rules forbid her from crying. It is the predicament of a woman who is denied the right to be herself. She is ashamed of her womanhood as a result of her failure in her desire for independence and self-identity:

It is I who laugh, it is I who make love

And then, feel shame, ‘An Introduction’[4]

Similarly, in the poem "Substitute," she expresses her dissatisfaction with the fate of love reduced to lust and, as a result, chooses to seek a substitute. The poem expresses her great dissatisfaction with love where "Life is quite simple now--/ Love, blackmail and sorrow." In the end, her loneliness is exacerbated by her urge to comply with the standards of a hypocritical society. In a thoughtful refrain, the poet ironically mocks the family situation:

It will be all right, it will be all right

I am the type that endures.

It will be all right, it will be alright

It will be alright between the world and me [5]

Her protest may be observed in her willingness to mock society while refusing to follow its dictates in whatever way she can. As a result, the poet's true motivation for disclosing her personal secrets is not out of any sense of shame, but rather as a challenge to society, undermining its socio-cultural conventions. The poem "Composition" expresses her plight, sense of insecurity, solitude, and agony directed not just at her parents, husband, other family members, and friends, but also at society as a whole:

The only secrets I always
withhold
are that I am so alone
and that I miss my grandmother [6]

In the institution of marriage, the woman feels she has been relegated to the status of a dwarf. The dissatisfied 'self' identifies with the dancing eunuch, who evokes death, rottenness, a mechanical manner of life, and eerie loneliness. The last detachment was determined to be bemusement at her inability to believe she had simply lost and lost. The final verdict on the woman at large has been pronounced they are the type fated to endure. The lonely poet becomes the representative voice of the 'million, million, people', 'million, million silences' and the 'million, million deaths'.

Her love poetry expresses her disapproval of sexual violence. The bloodless assassination of womanhood in the poem "The Doubt" is the assassination of womanhood not just of Kamala Das, but of all women. It is the mental brutality imposed on millions of women by men who do not comprehend the female psychology in sex and consider them as commodities, at times as tissue papers. In Kamala Das' poetry, women are seen as performers, entertainers, toys, puppets, and commodities. She has been socialized to provide pleasure and happiness to patriarchal males, a group that has been subjected to sexual assault. Nani's hanging corpse continues to delight the youngsters even after she has died. Her 'illegitimate' womb is a metaphor for women in general.

It is masculine culture that forces her to choose her roles based on their practicality. She is compelled to play the role of a slave or an idol. Her demeanor reflects her deplorable state as a woman. In her book, *My Story*, she writes:

"Often I have toyed with the idea of drowning myself; o get rid of my loneliness which is not unique in any way but: is natural to all. I have wanted to find rest in the sea and an escape from involvements". [7]

A woman yearns for love at all times, and this love cannot be one-sided. It should be mutually beneficial. Kamala Das, on the other hand, finds a 'empty cistern' in her life instead of the juice of love. According to SaleemPeeradina, "She writes about love with the obsessiveness of a woman who can realize her being fully only through love. Not surprisingly, given the subject, the writing is some-times weak and self-indulgent". [8]

As a result, it is understandable that she is constantly hungry and sad in the absence of true love in her life. She spent the rest of her life looking for love, but she couldn't seem to find it. Her heart is still unsatisfied:

"When I die
Do not throw the meat and bones away
But pile them up
And

Let them tell
 By their smell
 What life was worth
 On this earth
 What love was worth
 In the end". [9]

She has experienced dissatisfaction, disillusionment, and drabness, which she has boldly portrayed via every verse-line of her poems. Her poems have an overarching tone of gloom. It has several references to her personal frustrations and feelings of loneliness. The poetess has finally realized that her quest for genuine love will not be fulfilled in this life.

The poet wakes up from a night of love and lust in *The Testing of the Sirens* to a morning filled with loneliness. A man with a pock-marked face and a warm smile approaches her and offers to drive her around. Last night, it was a filthy snob's love, and now it's a pock-marked monster with a smile and a camera.

".... Out in the street, we heard
 The sirens go, and I paused in talk to
 Weave their wail with the sound of his mirthless
 Laughter..." [10]

The sirens' gloomy wailing gives way to the new lover's mirthless laughter. The poet's inner pain is symbolized by the siren's song. It's the wistful cries of a betrayed lover. Her devotion to both boyfriends is merely a fleeting thrill. She isn't involved in anything.

The poem is part of Kamala Das' ongoing yearning for an eternal and perfect partner, which is a recurring theme in her work. Here, love becomes a never-ending and agonizing game of possession. The two pictures of the pregnant girl baring her dark breasts and the crows arguing over a piece of lizard meat highlight the evasiveness of true love and the harshness of lust masquerading as love.

Kamala Das' poetry is centered on the search for love and isolation. Her poetry are all autobiographical. Das offers herself as someone who can articulate her own confessional urge through writing. She primarily writes about love, betrayal, and the ensuing sorrow. Her guiltiness and forthrightness about sexual matters drew sympathy from an Indian reader. Her writings depict a search for real love that resulted in disappointment and dissatisfaction. Her poetry is a forceful protest against a male-dominated culture, since it mirrors her own self. Her poetry depicts her romantic failures as well as the voices of the world's oppressed women. Love, she believes, must lead to self-awareness and evolution. When it satisfies her romantic goal as well as her emotional need, it is referred to be pure love.

CONCLUSIONS

Thus, her poetry and autobiography reveal the source of her loneliness. In the patriarchal system, she sees herself as a marginalized woman who is entirely ignored and unwelcome. When gender knowledge is foisted upon her at a young age, she feels discriminated against, while the males march silently towards puberty. In her writings, the woman is always looking for identity and independence in the man-made world. Some of the constituents of loneliness clearly reflected in her poetry include patriarchal designs, gender categorization, the institution of marriage, inability to walk with men in search of freedom and identity, spiritual satisfaction, the celebration of womanhood in love, travelling too far beyond the permissible boundary in her quest, and showing impatience against traditional and ethical values.

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